US Army Corps of Engineers ®
Tulsa District

Tar Creek and Spring River Watershed Management Plan

December 2003

News from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

This newsletter is the first of a series of newsletters to provide information on various activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and others, regarding an organized effort to address the issues in the Tar Creek and Spring River watersheds.

Due to the magnitude and complexity of issues in the Tar Creek watershed, a team consisting of the public, Federal agencies, Tribal governments, state government, local governments, and other interests, will be required to develop and implement a comprehensive watershed plan. The plan will be flexible and refined as new information is developed.

Ultimately, the recommended plan will need to be approved and the federal share funded by Congress. Support of the plan by the general public along with support of other federal agencies, tribal, state and local governments is very important.

We encourage you to work with us through a 6-step planning process that consists of the following activities: identification of problems and opportunities, inventory and forecast of conditions, formulation of alternative plans, evaluation of alternative plans, comparison of plans, and selection of a recommended plan. Your knowledge, experience, and understanding of local concerns are valuable and will contribute greatly to the team effort. Working with you will be technical experts and others from various federal, tribal, state, and local entities.

The first public meetings for this effort were held on October 7 and 9 in Picher and Miami. The meetings provided an opportunity for the Corps to present information on the process for accomplishing the Watershed Management Plan and for the public to ask questions about the process. The Corps of Engineers appreciates the persons who attended these meetings and found the comments provided by the residents to be helpful. The Corps looks forward to meeting with the Residents again in late January or early February of 2004.

Some of you have already become involved in the planning process. If you desire to be on our mailing list for notification of meetings, to be removed from the mailing list, or wish to provide comments, please contact:

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Contributions, questions, and comments on the newsletter are welcome. We hope you find the information to be helpful and informative.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

- Public meeting is being planned for late January or early February.
- The transcripts of the public meetings are being finalized. They will be available to the public on the Corps website in early January. Hard copies are available for viewing at the Tulsa District Office.

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Current US Geological Survey Projects in the Tar Creek Area

By Monica Allen
US Geological Survey

The US Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, is performing a data collection effort in the Tri-State Mining area. The project will enhance the current stream-monitoring network in the Picher-Miami-Commerce area and will provide the state with real-time flow data in the Picher mining district. Estimations of heavy metals concentrations flowing downstream from the mining area, as determined from water quality data collected from Tar Creek, Spring River, and Neosho River, will provide data to aid Federal, State, Tribal, and local officials. The objectives of the study are to: (1) analyze high-flow water samples (and low-flow samples collected from ODEQ) from Tar Creek, Spring River, and Neosho River for general water properties, trace elements, and major ions to determine the water quality, (2) utilize continuous stream flow data and water quality data from Tar Creek, Neosho River, and Spring River to estimate water and sediment quality entering the Grand-Neosho River Basin, (3) analyze metals concentrations in sediment in Tar Creek, Neosho River, and Spring River under base flow and high flow conditions, and (4) analyze sediments from the Tar Creek floodplain for metals composition.

The US Geological Survey will also work ¬within Seneca-Cayuga Tribal jurisdiction on Grand Lake to sample for trace metals in bed sediment and in water at two sites in Grand Lake to compare with data collected from an April 2002 study. Through these projects, the USGS will better quantify the effects of abandoned mines and mine by-products on streams, rivers, and reservoirs, and, through the dissemination of high-quality hydrologic data, will provide water-resource information that is useful to multiple parties for planning and operational purposes.

State Pursues Practical Remediation Projects

By Mary Jane Calvey
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality

Oklahoma state agencies are moving ahead with state funded restoration projects. One example is the field owned by Doug and Mary Ann Nutting west of the little league baseball diamond in Commerce. DEQ arranged for soils experts to test the site and develop a reclamation plan. County Commissioner John Clark combined forces with the City of Commerce to clear the site. The chat was plowed under, and the field was treated with organic matter (chicken litter, cow manure, and Commerce biosolids) and lime. Hybrid sudan was planted in late July and grew to be over six feet tall. Testing has demonstrated that the grass is free from high concentrations of lead, making it safe for both wildlife and grazing farm animals. Returning the soil to productive use also protects people from exposure to the lead in the formerly bare soil. These techniques have also been used to establish a protective vegetative cover at the repository for the contaminated soils removed by EPA from local yards.

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission has recently completed restoration efforts on 54 acres owned by several members of the McNeely family, east of Picher. This property was chosen for the project because it contained examples of the many types of hazards remaining from the mining. A highly contaminated dry mill pond was eliminated, seven mine shafts were plugged, and two large sink holes were filled. Organic amendments are helping the soil produce productive pastures, and two ponds will provide water for future livestock.

The University of Oklahoma is about two thirds complete on a project designed to verify the safety of using chat in asphalt. Key to the environmental safety is the fate of the lead contamination as the asphalt weathers or is ground and recycled into new asphalt. OU engineers are also developing designs that will maximize the use of chat in new road construction. It is hoped that this work will enhance the marketability of the chat and hasten the removal of the chat piles.

Acre by acre, mile by mile, these projects are showing that there are practical solutions for the scarred lands at Tar Creek.

Grand Gateway Economic Development Association HUD Grant for the Control of Lead-Based Paint Hazards

By John Pryor
Grand Gateway Economic Development Authority

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has awarded a grant to Grand Gateway Economic Development Association (GGEDA) for the identification and control of Lead-Based Paint (LBP) hazards from owner-occupied and rental-occupied housing within Ottawa County in northeastern Oklahoma. There is a minimum of 135 homes planned for the grant period. GGEDA is now accepting applications for this project.

HUD requires that households approved for assistance meet HUD regional income requirements. The property must be in the target area shown in the HUD contract and must contain lead-based paint hazards. However, you may request a Lead-Based Paint inspection regardless of program eligibility within the geographical limits of the grant.

Upon returning an application, we will schedule a walk-through of the property with you. Once the building has been found to be eligible, it will be given a priority rating based on the following; children 6 months to 6 years of age living in the home; a high lead hazard present; and the owner's willingness to temporarily relocate if required by the Hazard Control plan. Projects will be chosen on the basis of their priority ranking. Documentation proving ownership, lease and/or lessor agreements, blood lead levels of children and income levels of residents should be submitted along with the application.

If your application is approved to participate in the project, you will be asked to complete a Letter of Intent showing your commitment to continue with the inspection phase. The inspection phase will include a lead inspection/risk assessment of the home. A formal inspection for lead-based paint hazards will then be scheduled.

Please return completed applications to Grand Gateway EDA, 121 N. Main, 2nd Floor, or P.O. Box 311, Miami OK 74355. The Grand Gateway office is located in the same building as Work Force Development. If you would like more information or assistance, please feel free to contact Tami McKeon, Director or John Pryor, Project Coordinating Manager at the Grand Gateway EDA Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Project at (918) 541-1931.

Completed Reports

The USGS report, done in cooperation with ODEQ, *Assessment and Comparison of 1976-77 and 2002 Water Quality in Mineshafts in the Picher Mining District, Northeastern Oklahoma and Southeastern Kansas* WRIR 03-4248 by Kelli DeHay has been completed and is available by contacting the author at kdehay@usgs.gov.

Check out the project webpage on the
Tulsa District web site ...
http://www.swt.usace.army.mil
Click on "Local Links"
Look for Tar Creek and Spring River
Watershed Management Plan